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Links between information and communications technology processes and sustainable development

Summary

The present document reviews international and regional information and communications technology processes since the first (Geneva, 2003) and second (Tunis, 2005) phases of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), and the adoption of the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society on 16 December 2015.

The present document is submitted to the thirtieth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to invite member States to strengthen their participation in those processes and increase synergies among them. It is also aimed at inviting them to further support the role of ESCWA in linking WSIS processes to the sustainable development process in the Arab region.

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Introduction

1. Since the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2003, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has played an active role in leading regional efforts to build an information society. The role of ESCWA developed further following the second phase of the World Summit in 2005 and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/125 of 16 December 2015 on the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. In the resolution, the General Assembly called for close alignment between the WSIS process and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[1]

2. ESCWA is working on promoting the development of a digital economy and smart societies in the Arab region, and on using information and communications technology (ICT) to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has undertaken this role in the context of the call of the General Assembly on regional commissions to continue their work in implementation of WSIS action lines and their contributions to the reviews thereof in the aforementioned resolution.

3. The present document reviews United Nations processes on ICT for development, and links between these processes and the sustainable development process in the Arab region.[2] It also highlights regional mechanisms for participating in those international processes.

I. LINKING THE WSIS PROCESS WITH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

A. International perspective

4. In an information society, development is achieved through the production, exchange and adaptation of information so as to improve the living standards and working conditions of all people. An information society is fundamentally, but not exclusively, built on digital technology. There are disparities in countries' capacity to adapt to rapid developments in technology and knowledge. The transformation towards an information and knowledge society poses significant challenges for developing countries.

5. The General Assembly adopted resolution 56/183 of 21 December 2001, which welcomes the resolution adopted by the Council of the International Telecommunication Union in which the Council endorsed the proposal to hold the World Summit on the Information Society. WSIS aims to bridge the digital divide between developed and developing countries and promote the establishment of an equitable and inclusive information society, by raising awareness of its benefits and by providing the necessary mechanisms to assist developing countries to advance in that process. WSIS was held over two phases: the first in Geneva in 2003, and the second in Tunis in 2005.

1. *First WSIS phase – Geneva 2003*

6. During the first phase of the World Summit, participants adopted the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action.[3] The Declaration of Principles confirms the commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society, where everyone can access information on an equal footing. The Declaration recognizes that the benefits of the information technology revolution are unevenly distributed, and commits to bridging the digital divide and to harnessing ICT to achieve the SDGs.

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[1] General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015.

[2] This document builds upon document E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/4(Part I), which was presented at the first session of the Committee on Technology for Development, which was held in Dubai, in February 2017.

[3] WSIS-03/GENEVA/9(Rev.1)-E.

7. The Plan of Action contains the following 11 action lines: C1 - the role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development; C2 - information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for the information society; C3 - access to information and knowledge; C4 - capacity-building; C5 - building confidence and security in the use of ICTs; C6 - enabling environment; C7 - ICT applications: benefits in all aspects of life; C8 - cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content; C9 - media; C10 - ethical dimensions of the information society; and C11 - international and regional cooperation.

8. Although member States approved the WSIS action lines, Internet governance was a controversial issue. Disagreements revolved around governance methods and stakeholders. The issues remained contentious even after the second phase of WSIS.

2. *Second WSIS phase – Tunis 2005*

9. The second phase of the World Summit reviewed progress since the first phase, and concluded with the adoption of the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.[4] The Tunis Commitment focuses on the following key thematic areas and related issues: Internet governance, financial mechanisms, ensuring access to information and knowledge for all, democracy, sustainable development, freedom of expression, and the free flow of information. The Commitment also raised awareness of the benefits that ICTs can bring to humanity, and their potential role in transforming human activities and interaction.

10. The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society stresses the need to regulate implementation at the international level, in accordance with the action lines set out in the Geneva Plan of Action. It stipulates providing a clear mandate for regional commissions regarding the implementation process at the regional level in coordination with United Nations agencies, as required. It also considers the issue of Internet governance through an invitation to establish two processes: the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) that involves all stakeholders, and an enhanced cooperation process between government bodies. The IGF was launched in 2006, but the enhanced cooperation process has faltered.

3. *Renewing the mandates of WSIS and iGF until 2025*

11. In 2015, the WSIS mandate was renewed for 10 years until 2025, pursuant to the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of WSIS,[5] which became an input in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. The IGF mandate was also extended to 2025.

12. The key aim of the outcome document was to underscore the increasing reliance of development on digital technology. It set out various ideas related to digital development and the 2030 Agenda. The regional commissions' mandates were also extended, stressing their vital role in supporting the implementation and follow-up process at the regional level. In addition to the 11 action lines contained in the Geneva Plan of Action, other issues were highlighted such as human rights, trust, security and Internet governance.

B. Regional perspective

13. Under the WSIS mandate, the regional commissions play a key role in the Summit's regional follow-up activities. During the Summit's 2003 and 2005 phases, the regional commissions coordinated their efforts in WSIS annual forums and submitted reports on related regional activities and plans.

14. In this context, ESCWA adopted resolution 273 (XXIV) of 11 May 2006 on the follow-up to the development of the Information Society in Western Asia, in which it stresses the importance of following up

[4] WSIS-05/TUNIS/DOC/6(Rev.1)-E.

[5] A/RES/70/125.

on the implementation of the Tunis Agenda and the ESCWA Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society by strengthening collaboration with member States, providing advisory services to them in fields related to the formulation and implementation of national ICT strategies and action plans, developing a mechanism to foster multi-stakeholder partnerships, and facilitating the implementation of ICT applications for economic and social development.

15. Within the framework of WSIS+10, the scope of the regional commissions' role was expanded, especially with regard to aligning WSIS outputs with the SDGs.

1. *Preparatory and follow-up activities for WSIS - 2003-2015*

16. Since the launch of WSIS, ESCWA has undertaken a regional leadership role in that regard. Prior to and following the Geneva and Tunis phases, ESCWA held preparatory conferences and conducted follow-up activities to promote the participation of member States, resulting in the 2004 Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society.[6] ESCWA also established a network for ICT policymakers aimed at enhancing regional and international cooperation, identifying appropriate mechanisms for implementing regional projects, developing models for formulating ICT strategies and related action plans, and exchanging new practices and lessons learned.

17. The Regional Plan of Action comprised 10 programmes and 38 projects. Further projects were added in 2007, proposed by the League of Arab States and other regional bodies. The Plan was updated in 2009 under the framework of regional activities to follow up on WSIS outcomes, which resulted in the Damascus Proclamation for Strengthening the Arab Knowledge Society for Sustainable Socioeconomic Development.[7] Moreover, under the Arab ICT Strategy, the League of Arab States adopted several projects proposed in the Regional Plan of Action.

18. ESCWA prioritized encouraging member States to develop, adopt and implement national strategies on ICT and the information society. In 2005, it published a study entitled *Towards an Integrated Knowledge Society in Arab Countries: Strategies and Implementation Modalities*[8] containing a reference framework and guide for formulating and implementing national strategies aimed at building an information society and advancing knowledge-based economies in Arab countries. ESCWA resolution 273 (XXIV) has not yet been updated despite the fundamental developments that have occurred since 2006.

19. In 2007, ESCWA published guidelines for the formulation and implementation of the ICT strategy[9] to assist policymakers in formulating and updating ICT policies and strategies. Over the period 2006-2015, ESCWA prepared many studies and organized activities related to the ICT sector under the WSIS action lines.

20. As part of the WSIS follow-up activities, ESCWA developed an information society portal (ISPER), which is an open-source interactive application in both English and Arabic containing a database. It provides information on the status of the information society in the Arab region and on progress and achievements under each WSIS action line. The content of the portal has been transferred to the ESCWA website.[10]

21. To support Governments and information society stakeholders, ESCWA has published seven issues of its biennial report entitled *Regional Profile of the Information Society in the Arab Region* since 2005. The

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[6] E/ESCWA/ICTD/2004/4.

[7] Summarized in E/ESCWA/ICTD/2009/13.

[8] E/ESCWA/ICTD/2005/3.

[9] E/ESCWA/ICTD/2007/2.

[10] https://www.unescwa.org/arabISprofiles.

report presents information covering the eleven WSIS action lines, drawing on national sources. It also identifies regional and national ICT initiatives that contribute to achieving the SDGs.

2. *Regional follow-up activities for WSIS after 2015*

22. Over the past 10 years, international organizations operating in the Arab region, including ESCWA, have launched several initiatives related to implementing the WSIS action lines in the region, and have closely coordinated efforts with Arab Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, other regional commissions, United Nations specialized agencies and programmes, and the League of Arab States. However, links between SDG and WSIS stakeholders remain weak. Even among WSIS stakeholders, links between technology sectors and the administrative development sector require improvement.

23. WSIS+10 invited regional commissions to continue their work in implementing the WSIS action lines, including conducting a periodic regional review to evaluate progress and to adapt or readapt the action lines. Despite those efforts, there is still an urgent need to link between the various information society processes to achieve sustainable development.

24. Achieving the SDGs requires full commitment to WSIS processes. Building an information society is indeed a necessary prerequisite for member States to achieve sustainable development. WSIS processes remain the most comprehensive and multidisciplinary processes in the field of technology for development.

25. ESCWA is striving to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive people-centred information society aimed at achieving development. It recently organized several activities on the relationship between digital technology and implementing the 2030 Agenda, notably the Arab High-level Forum on WSIS and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Beirut, May 2017), under which were held the Conference on Digital Technologies for Sustainable Development Goals and the experts meeting on Shaping the Digital Future in the Arab Region.

26. In 2017, ESCWA prepared a study entitled "Arab Horizon 2030: Digital Technologies for Development,"[11] which analyses the growing digital divide between Arab countries and developed countries. It projects the future of several related policy areas until 2030, and proposes fundamental and urgent changes to reduce the divide. In 2018, ESCWA also organized several workshops on the topic, which included the following events:

- An Arab ministerial round table on digital technology for development (horizon 2030) in the Arab countries, held during the World Government Summit (Dubai, February 2018);
- An ESCWA session held at the WSIS Forum (Geneva, 22 March 2018) entitled "Arab Interregional Consultation Meeting on Digital Technologies for Sustainable Development 2030 and Related Regional Processes".

27. Participants and stakeholders at such events stressed the important role of ESCWA, and highlighted its efforts in following up and implementing the WSIS action lines in the Arab region and in organizing events related to Internet governance to achieve the 2030 Agenda. They invited ESCWA to undertake the following:

- Launch an Arab forum on the information society to be held periodically, complemented by a periodic review of progress in achieving the requirements of WSIS and the SDGs in member States at the national level, similar to the annual WSIS Forum and work currently conducted by the other regional commissions. The Arab forum would follow up and support the Arab region's efforts on establishing an information society and digital economy over the next decade;
- Intensify cooperation between ESCWA and organizations operating in the Arab region to integrate WSIS processes and SDG processes.

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[11] Full version is available at https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/arab-horizon-2030-digital-technologies-development-en.pdf.

II. INTERNET GOVERNANCE PROCESS EMANATING FROM WSIS AND ITS LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

A. INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

28. Internet governance was a controversial issue during the first phase of WSIS, held in Geneva in 2003. The role of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), as a private enterprise contracted with the United States Government, was a contentious issue for countries, especially Brazil, China, South Africa and some Arab countries. In the absence of consensus, even regarding the definition of Internet governance, the Secretary-General of the United Nations formed the Working Group on Internet Governance to resolve such issues and prepare a report on the topic before the second phase of WSIS.

29. The Working Group defined Internet governance as "the development and application by Governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet".[12] It also identified public policy issues related to Internet governance, in accordance with paragraph 13 (b) of the Geneva Plan of Action. Public policy issues included administration of the root zone files and system; interconnection costs; Internet stability, security and cybercrime; spam; meaningful participation in global policy development; capacity-building; allocation of domain names; Internet protocol addressing; intellectual property rights; freedom of expression; data protection and privacy rights; consumer rights; and multilingualism.[13]

30. During the second phase of WSIS, held in Tunis in 2005, participants reached a consensus allowing for broader international discussions on public policy principles through the establishment of the IGF and the enhanced cooperation process. The IGF mandate is set out in paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.

31. IGF involves all stakeholders in deliberations, but does not have the authority to make decisions. It considers global Internet governance matters, but does not issue an outcome document. Those features are vital because they bring together stakeholders to discuss public policy, which automatically affects decision-making processes at all levels. The word 'recommendations' was replaced by 'messages' since the latter are non-binding. High-level discussions are expected to result in key messages that organizations can take into account when making decisions on certain issues, projects and treaties.

32. The enhanced cooperation process has not yet been launched. The General Assembly has formed several teams to conduct further discussions on the process, focusing on the role of stakeholders and the nature of cooperation between them in terms of implementation, especially the role of Governments in relation to other stakeholders. Some participants stressed the need for the cooperation process to include all stakeholders in line with their roles, while others said that it was necessary to focus on Governments in accordance with the Tunis Agenda and that the process should take an intergovernmental form. The League of Arab States and ESCWA are currently working together on both issues.

B. REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

1. *Internet governance in the Arab region: Forum and roadmap*

33. In 2009, ESCWA, in partnership with the League of Arab States, launched an initiative entitled the Arab Dialogue on Internet Governance. In the same year, it published a study entitled *Internet Governance: Challenges*

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[12] Report of the Working Group on Internet Governance, June 2005, p. 4, para. 10. Available at https://www.wgig.org/docs/WGIGREPORT.pdf.

[13] Ibid, pp. 5-9.

and Opportunities for the ESCWA Member Countries[14] and the *Arab Regional Roadmap for Internet Governance: Framework, Principles and Objectives*.[15] The regional roadmap helped identify the objective of the Arab Dialogue on Internet Governance by developing a clear strategic framework to tackle Internet governance issues from a regional perspective. ESCWA presented the roadmap at IGF 2010. Internet experts in the Arab region discussed the roadmap in October 2010, and launched the "Call of Arab stakeholders: Towards activating comprehensive Arab cooperation for Internet governance, regionally and internationally",[16] in which they stressed the importance of developing an Arab Internet governance forum as a platform for dialogue on public policy and for cooperation between all stakeholders in the Arab region. They requested ESCWA and the League of Arab States to intensify efforts to achieve that objective. In 2011, the outcomes of those efforts were presented to the Arab Telecommunications and Information Council of Ministers of the League of Arab States, which requested ESCWA and the League of Arab States to hold consultations at the regional level to confirm the importance of instituting the forum and to prepare for its establishment.

34. In 2012, ESCWA and the League of Arab States held a conference and general consultations on establishing an Arab IGF,[17] mobilizing partners wishing to host it, and forming a technical secretariat for the first four years (2012-2015). The League of Arab States presented an outcome document containing the consultation results to the Executive Office of the Arab Telecommunications and Information Council of Ministers at its thirty-first session (Beirut, 2 February 2012), which endorsed the establishment of the forum. ESCWA adopted resolution 306 (XXVII) on developing the Arab Internet Governance Forum process and sustaining efforts in the Arabic domain names field, in which it encourages Governments of member States to actively participate in completing the process of establishing the Arab IGF in coordination with the League of Arab States.

Objectives of the Arab IGF

1. Discuss public policy issues related to Internet governance, particularly the issues raised in the global IGF in order to foster the accessibility, security, stability and development of the Internet;
2. Facilitate the exchange of information, best practice, lessons learned and knowledge, particularly between policymakers, technical experts and academics and to publish recommendations and proposals;
3. Harmonize different points of view into a common understanding of the region's priorities for Internet governance and the mechanisms to respond to the needs of Arab countries;
4. Discuss emerging technologies independent of the operational management of the Internet, and develop relevant recommendations, as needed;
5. Contribute to capacity-building in the area of Internet governance in Arab countries, and encourage all stakeholders to participate and benefit from resources of knowledge and experience;
6. Transfer the Arab perspective to the global level and support the Arab role in the formulation of public policies for Internet governance without taking a supervisory role or replacing existing mechanisms, institutions or organizations;
7. Communicate with regional and international IGFs to facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge transfer.

Source: E/ESCWA/ICTD/2012/WG.2/Report.

[14] E/ESCWA/ICTD/2009/7.

[15] E/ESCWA/ICTD/2010/Technical Paper.5.

[16] Available in Arabic at http://css.escwa.org.lb/ictd/1301/16.pdf.

[17] E/ESCWA/ICTD/2012/WG.2/Report.

35. The Arab IGF was established in 2012, in conformity with the mandate of the global IGF. It aims to involve all stakeholders, including Governments, the private sector, civil society, technicians, academics and regional organizations, in an open dialogue on Internet public policies relating to access, security, privacy and openness.

2. *Key components of the Arab IGF*

36. The League of Arab States and ESCWA have undertaken to sponsor the process of the Arab IGF, while the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Egypt functioned as the Forum's secretariat in its first phase until the end of 2015. In 2013, the Executive Bureau for the Joint Coordination of the Arab IGF was established, chaired by ESCWA and the League of Arab States and consisting of the Forum's secretariat. The Executive Bureau is responsible for making key decisions on determining the Arab IGF overall process, including assigning roles to partners, forming the Forum's Arab Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (AMAG), and selecting the host of the Forum's annual meetings in coordination with the Arab IGF secretariat.

37. The Executive Bureau is also tasked with coordinating between key partners, the host and AMAG to prepare for Arab IGF annual meetings, ensuring broad stakeholder participation and communicating officially with policymakers so as to guarantee the Forum's continuity and success.

38. AMAG is a component of the Arab IGF and comprises representatives of all stakeholders in the Arab region. It has several functions, including selecting technical issues for discussion at the Forum's annual meetings. It was established in 2012 and reshuffled in 2014 to include 34 experts representing stakeholders. It was reshuffled again in April 2015, and membership was kept open to encourage government representatives to participate further in the development of the Arab IGF process.

3. *Activities of the Arab IGF*

39. Preparations for the Arab IGF annual meetings occur over several stages: AMAG determines the Forum's theme, discussion topics and programme; the host is selected following the adoption of the terms of reference that identify the responsibilities and requirements of hosting the Arab IGF; and the host carries out logistic and administrative preparations for the meeting.

40. Since its establishment in 2012, the following four Arab IGF meetings have been held:

- The first meeting (Kuwait, 9-11 October 2012) was hosted by the Kuwait Information Technology Society on the theme "A better Internet for a better Arab world";
- The second meeting (Algiers, 1-3 October 2013) was hosted by the Ministry of Post, Information and Telecommunications Technologies on the theme "Partners for development";
- The third meeting (Beirut, 26-27 November 2014) was hosted by ESCWA on the theme "Arab perspective for shaping the future of the Internet";
- The fourth meeting (Beirut, 17-18 December 2015) was hosted by OGERO Telecom on the theme "Internet economy for sustainable development".

41. The meetings resulted in several strategic messages to help decision makers in the Arab region to take appropriate decisions in the field of Internet governance.

42. At the closing of the fourth Arab IGF meeting, ESCWA and the League of Arab States launched a regional initiative, AIGF2020, to evaluate and strengthen the Forum's impact. The initiative aims to review progress achieved by the Arab IGF in its first phase (2012-2015) and improve its performance in the second phase that is expected to extend until 2020 or 2025 (the end of the current 10-year mandate of WSIS).

4. *AIGF2020 Initiative*

43. The implementation of the initiative began in 2016 and entailed several interconnected activities, including forming technical cooperation working groups to support the two umbrella organizations of the Arab IGF, ESCWA and the League of Arab States, in implementing the initiative's components.

44. The main aim of the initiative is to:

(a) Review the Forum's accomplishments during its first phase (2012-2015), especially regarding the goals of the Arab Regional Roadmap for Internet Governance launched by ESCWA in 2010;

(b) Assess the Forum's impact on Internet governance in the Arab region;

(c) Discuss challenges faced by the Arab IGF in its first phase;

(d) Offer suggestions on an updated Arab regional roadmap on Internet governance and on the Forum's second phase, so as to achieve the SDGs.

45. The initiative resulted in the following two main outputs:

(a) The Arab IGF Charter, constituting the Forum's general reference framework for the second phase and containing standard operating procedures for its main components, in line with the powers set out in the Arab IGF mandate for the second phase;

(b) The Arab Roadmap for Internet Governance (second edition), which is in line with the 2030 Agenda and aims to encourage stakeholders participating in preparing regional and national plans on Internet governance to benefit from digital technology in achieving sustainable development, and to enhance stakeholder participation in implementing those plans. The roadmap identifies the following new issues:

- *Meaningful access for inclusion*: The term 'access' is used with a very broad interpretation. It should not be restricted to its traditional meaning of adding more subscribers online and just improving penetration indicators. It should mean removal of all possible barriers that limit people's possibilities to reach the Internet and deal with it in a comfortable and useful way. These barriers include the language barrier (for instance, domain names in the Arabic language), and discrimination again social groups, such as women, and other possible barriers. Therefore, it has been assigned the highest priority;

- *Trust and security*: This is of a more general scope than the previous "security" subprogramme and the traditional cybersecurity theme. It involves the national and international legal structures and systems for providing safety, privacy and integrity of the Internet, as well as protecting the property of Internet users, particularly minors and novice users. This also includes the transparency of dealing with the huge amount of data resulting from Internet usage and the need to have an open data policy;

- *Institutional empowerment*: Participating in global public Internet policymaking to shape more balanced, accountable, internationalized and transparent institutional governance schemes is particularly important after the transition of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA). The issue of enhanced cooperation needs to be addressed in line with the global work on finding an adequate mechanism to implement it. The participation of developing countries in policymaking has been considerably improved over the years, but there is still a significant need for better and more effective involvement to avoid further delays in their development (such as high fees for generic top-level domains (gTLD) application process, and the conflict resolution mechanism based on auctions which might not be suitable for developing countries).

Public awareness and capacity-building are a fundamental pillar to improve this participation and engage enough people and resources in the Internet governance process;

- *Internet innovations and emerging ecosystems*: This involves the set of issues related to new opportunities offered by the Internet, in the form of economic opportunities or useful applications that could go beyond entertainment and offer a real added value whether economic, social or in other forms;

- *Human development*: This involves the set of issues related to human rights, youth involvement, activating the Internet's role as an effective tool for social development, and relying on the available social media to promote dialogue between different active entities in society and breaking the barriers between various segments of society;

- *Critical Internet resources and Internet infrastructure*: Making sure that the following critical Internet resources are managed on an equitable basis: root zone files and root server system; domain names; Internet protocol addresses; innovative and convergent technologies; and technical standards;

- *Cultural and linguistic diversity*: Improving Internet diversity by increasing digital content relevant to the Arab culture and other cultures and local groups from the region.

III. CONCLUSION

46. Pursuant to recommendations by countries that tasked ESCWA with following up on implementing WSIS action lines in the Arab region and aligning them with the SDGs, ESCWA drafted a concept note in the second quarter of 2018 to prepare for the first issue of the *Arab Report on Digital Technology for Development*, which is expected to be published in 2019. The report will monitor Arab countries' efforts to bridge the growing digital divides between Arab countries and developed countries. In 2018, ESCWA will hold several consultations to involve member States in workshops aimed at preparing national reports for inclusion in the Arab report. National reports will be presented to the Arab High-level Forum on WSIS and the 2030 Agenda, to be held in 2019, and then periodically thereafter similar to the Arab IGF. The outputs of both forums are expected to be used as inputs to the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, which is held annually and constitutes a high-level regional platform to review and follow up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region.